decentralisation, simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and regions. With the changes in the international situation and the measures taken by the Government the target were achieved in 1999-2000.

Indian Patent Office

23. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Patent Office is faced with several major impediments and bottlenecks in its functioning;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to tone up its functioning so that it can effectively cope with increasing number of violations of patent laws from different quarters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. the major impediments and bottlenecks being faced by the Patent Office are due to manual nature of operations, inadequate manpower and accommodation, limited facilities for international level search and examination and increasing backlog of patent applications.

(c) In order to address these problems, Government has undertaken modernisation of the Patent Offices in order to streamline and rationalise the procedure for grant of patents. This includes infrastructure and human resource development, re-engineering of work procedures, computerisation of operators, networking of offices, focus on clearance of backlog of pending applications and awareness creation. Several steps have already been taken for clearance of backlog of pending patent applications. These include action for recruitment of additional Examiners, hiring of additional accommodation for the patent offices and acquisition of additional computer equipments.

ITC monopoly in tobacco market

24. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether ITC monopoly in the market was leading to heavy lossses to

the farmers especially in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether Government propose to intervene at the tobacco auction centres to foil the game plan of the Indian Tobacco Company; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Government has directed State Trading Corporation (STC) of India to intervene to lend buoyancy in the market. Accordingly STC has commenced procurement w.e.f 21.4.2000 and till 19.7.2000 STC has procured 5.46 million kgs of FCV tobacco. Tobacco Board has also commenced purchases of low grades tobacco at Minimum Support Price with effect from 26.6.2000.

Companies Manufacturing Calcium Carbide for Retail Sales

25. SHRI K. C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) how many companies in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh are manufacturing Calcium Carbide for retail sales in the country",

(b) whether any licence is required to be taken to sell these indigenously manufactured Calcium Carbide (solid form) by retailers in Karnataka; and

(c) if so, upto which limit, the retailers can sell it without obtaining any licence?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) The information is as below:

(a) Karnataka	2
(b) Kerala	11
(c) Tamil Nadu	10
(d) Andhra Pradesh	1

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c)As per rule 26 of the Calcium Carbide Rules, 1987, a licence is required by retailers to store and sell indigenously manufactured Calcium Carbide (solid form).